

# The Celestial Spouse

The Celestial Spouse, also known as Tian Fei and Mazu, was (in her human life) a woman from the Lin family who lived during the Song dynasty (960-1279). There are several versions of the story of her life and miraculous deeds, but the one in the text that this illustration comes from recounts the following:



She had four brothers who were merchants who frequently travelled on the seas. One day suddenly her arms and legs became numb and her eyes became blind. She was like this for some time. Her parents thought that she had become ill, and anxiously called out to her. She regained consciousness, and reprimanded them, saying, "Don't you want me to my brothers? There's nothing wrong with me." Her parents did not understand what she was saying, but they did not question her further.

Three days later, three of her brothers returned, with horrendous tales of a storm at sea which had nearly killed them. In the midst of the storm, a woman appeared and calmed the seas. Her parents then understood that when she was unconscious, her spirit had gone to save her brothers. Her eldest brother perished in the storm because when they woke her, her spirit returned.

The biography goes on to recount other miracles, and the numerous titles bestowed on the Celestial Spouse by the Chinese state. It concludes by saying:

Early in our dynasty, in the seventh year of the reign of the Yongle emperor, the noble Zheng He travelled to the lands of the barbarians to the south and west. He prayed at the temple to the Celestial Spouse, and she responded as she had during the Song dynasty. When he returned, he asked that a title be bestowed on her. She was bestowed with the title "All-Pervading Celestial Spouse, who possesses a wondrous spirit-efficacy and broad humanity and protects the nation and guards the people." A shrine to her was established in the capital, and people all over the empire prayed to her.